



Commission on Equity and Opportunity

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Public Health Committee

22 March 2017

Testimony SUPPORTING House Bill 5764: An Act Concerning the Licensing of Barbers and Hairdressers

Dear Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinburg, and members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

The Commission on Equity and Opportunity voices its **strong support for House Bill 5764: An Act Concerning the Licensing of Barbers and Hairdressers**. This bill would exempt Connecticut residents seeking to become barbers or hairdressers in our state from submitting criminal history data as a prerequisite to licensure.

We support this proposal particularly to promote economic stability and successful reentry of formerly incarcerated individuals into the community. Research indicates that housing and a steady income upon release from incarceration, in comport with strong support systems, can reduce recidivism¹. Furthermore, the State of Connecticut, as a self-proclaimed Second Chance Society, must take affirmative steps to ensure that all Connecticut residents have an opportunity to thrive personally and contribute to the collective well-being of our communities.

Many formerly incarcerated individuals served as prison barbers. Enabling these folks and others to obtain a barber or hairdresser license, despite criminal convictions for which they have already paid their due, complies with our states values and notions of justice. We must put an end to the cycle of criminalization and punishment without productive ends. We must make sure Connecticut residents have the opportunity to pursue move beyond their past and build a greater future for themselves and for our society.

¹ <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/32106/411778-Employment-after-Prison-A-Longitudinal-Study-of-Releasees-in-Three-States.PDF>

We thank you for your consideration of this important matter. As staff of the General Assembly, we avail ourselves to all members of the committee to further discuss the licensure of barbers and hairdressers in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Alok Bhatt
Policy Analyst, Commission on Equity & Opportunity